

# NATIONAL REVIEW

## President Trump's Finest Hour

With his speech to Congress, he pulled the rug from under his critics.

By Deroy Murdock — March 3, 2017

**P**resident Donald J. Trump's [address to Congress](#) left his critics sputtering. In beautifully written, sometimes soaring remarks, Trump repeatedly refuted the charges that his detractors on the right and left level against him.

In what widely is regarded as his finest hour, President Trump grew completely into his new role, as I [predicted](#) last fall. He has done so steadily since November 8. Tuesday night completed his metamorphosis from real-estate tycoon to commander-in-chief.

Trump's delivery was sober, but upbeat; serious, but hopeful. He envisioned a brighter future and challenged Americans to reach for it.

That's called leadership.

Rather than someone making his first appearance before an entire legislature, Trump looked and sounded as comfortable and confident as a former governor who had presented numerous state-of-the-state addresses or even a second-term president quite familiar with Tuesday's solemn setting. Who would imagine that Trump is still a rookie with barely six weeks' experience as a public official?

Trump's critics on the right still curl their lips at him, even as every day he brings to life policies about which conservatives merely have fantasized for decades.

Former G.W. Bush speechwriter Peter Wehner complained at *RealClearPolitics* about "the moral and intellectual decay that has spread as a result of Trump and Trumpism." Referring to "Trump and his aides," Wehner writes, "Some of us will continue to resist

their efforts to transform conservatism into an ethno-nationalist, blood-and-soil movement, one animated by grievances and a Nietzschean ethic.”

Columnist George Will predicts an anti-Trump rebellion by Rightists, in just a few months, “when they realize the slippery slope they’re on, away from bedrock conservative principles, I think things will change by mid summer.”

Trump’s ideas on trade and his apparent uninterest in entitlement reform should give conservatives pause. But the Wehner-Will camp fails to acknowledge that — under Trump, so far — the glass is 80 percent full.

If Trump were propelled by a Nietzschean will to power and by a desire to abandon conservatism, how do Wehner, Will, and other Never Trumpers explain what Trump himself showcases as his accomplishments since January 20:

- “a hiring freeze on non-military and non-essential federal workers”
- “a five-year ban on lobbying by executive branch officials and a lifetime ban on becoming lobbyists for a foreign government.”
- “a deregulation task force inside of every government agency”
- “a new rule which mandates that for every one new regulation, two old regulations must be eliminated”
- “We have cleared the way for the construction of the Keystone and Dakota Access Pipelines.”
- Trump is “finally enforcing our immigration laws.” He added: “We are removing gang members, drug dealers, and criminals that threaten our communities and prey on our very innocent citizens.”
- “We are also taking strong measures to protect our nation from radical Islamic terrorism,” Trump declared. “It is not compassionate, but reckless to allow uncontrolled entry from places where proper vetting cannot occur.”
- For the Supreme Court, “we have chosen Judge Neil Gorsuch, a man of incredible skill and deep devotion to the law.”

How sad that leading conservatives grouse about Trump and his unconventional style, even as he secures conservative victories by the ton.

Regarding the 20 percent of the glass that Trump has left empty, free-marketeers should greet with caution his observation Tuesday: “Currently, when we ship products out of America, many other countries make us pay very high tariffs and taxes. But when foreign companies ship their products into America, we charge them nothing, or almost nothing.”

There are two ways to correct this imbalance: slap tariffs and taxes on imports or negotiate with America’s trading partners to slash or eliminate tariffs and taxes on U.S. exports. Free-marketeers should persuade Trump to exhaust the latter before pursuing the former.

Fiscal conservatives also are nervous about Trump’s call for “legislation that produces a \$1 trillion investment in infrastructure of the United States — financed through both public and private capital.”

Even a brief drive almost anywhere in America will confirm that our streets and highways too often are bumpy, infested with potholes, or worse. The Right can be constructive by urging Trump to rely as much as possible on private money, transfer funds in block grants to the states, and require them first to repair deteriorating bridges, dams, roads, and tunnels that are likeliest to collapse and kill people. Consider Minneapolis’s I-35W Bridge. It tumbled into the Mississippi River during the evening rush hour on August 1, 2007. Thirteen perished, and 145 were wounded. A prudently financed national infrastructure effort should be, first and foremost, about preventing accidental injuries and deaths.

Trump’s address also should provide a hot spinal injection for invertebrate Republican lawmakers who went wobbly just weeks into the 115th Congress. Their worrisome statements about rescuing and repairing Obamacare should cease, now that Trump firmly has reiterated, as president, the promise on which he successfully campaigned. As he declared on Tuesday: “Tonight, I am also calling on this Congress to repeal and replace Obamacare with reforms that expand choice, increase access, lower costs, and, at the same time, provide better health care.”

Trump's foes, Right and Left, call him an isolationist who disregards long-standing U.S. allies, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Nonetheless, Trump said, "We strongly support NATO, an alliance forged through the bonds of two world wars that dethroned fascism, and a Cold War, and defeated Communism."

Trump appropriately noted that NATO is no free ride.

"We expect our partners — whether in NATO, the Middle East, or in the Pacific — to take a direct and meaningful role in both strategic and military operations, and pay their fair share of the cost."

Referring to ISIS — "a network of lawless savages" — Trump said, "We will work with our allies, including our friends and allies in the Muslim world, to extinguish this vile enemy from our planet."

Trump also "reaffirmed our unbreakable alliance with the State of Israel."

So much for Trump spurning America's allies.

On the left, the chief accusation against Trump is — what else? — racism.

But after he greeted his audience, *the very first sentence* of Trump's speech was: "Tonight, as we mark the conclusion of our celebration of Black History Month, we are reminded of our nation's path towards civil rights and the work that still remains to be done." Later, Trump introduced America to "a very good friend of mine" — a black man named Jamiel Shaw, who sat in the House gallery. As Trump explained, "Jamiel's 17-year-old son was viciously murdered by an illegal-immigrant gang member who had just been released from prison."

Trump also pointed to "a remarkable woman, Denisha Merriweather." Trump observed that this black woman "struggled in school and failed third grade twice." However, thanks to school choice, a tax credit, and a scholarship, she excelled on a private campus. She became the first in her family to graduate high school and college. Trump said, "Later this year, she will get her master's degree in social work. We want all children to be able to break the cycle of poverty just like Denisha."

How racist.

Last week, Trump said, “The anti-Semitic threats targeting our Jewish community and community centers are horrible and are painful, and a very sad reminder of the work that still must be done to root out hate and prejudice and evil.”

That was not good enough for Steven Goldstein of the Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect. He responded, “The anti-Semitism coming out of this administration is the worst we have ever seen from any administration.”

On Tuesday, Trump’s Jewish daughter, son-in-law, Treasury secretary, and top aides listened to the *second* sentence of his speech: “Recent threats targeting Jewish community centers and vandalism of Jewish cemeteries, as well as last week’s shooting in Kansas City, remind us that while we may be a nation divided on policies, we are a country that stands united in condemning hate and evil in all of its very ugly forms.”

How anti-Semitic.

Trump haters call him “divisive” so often, it might as well be his middle name.

And, yet, Trump repeatedly appealed for national unity and bipartisanship.

“We are one people, with one destiny. We all bleed the same blood. We all salute the same great American flag. And we all are made by the same God,” Trump stated. “Democrats and Republicans should get together and unite for the good of our country and for the good of the American people.” He added: “I am asking all members of Congress to join me in dreaming big, and bold, and daring things for our country.”

Trump’s overtures to Democrats parallel his outreach in recent months to former vice president Albert Gore, Academy Award winner Leonardo DiCaprio, Martin Luther King III, organized-labor officials, and — on Monday — some 40 or so leaders of historically black colleges and universities, whom Trump invited into the Oval Office. If — despite his open door — the Left slaps away the hand that Trump extends in friendship, then *they* are the dividers.

While Republicans repeatedly leapt to their feet to cheer Trump’s remarks, sedentary

Democrats largely stayed put through Trump's applause lines. True, Republicans often acted likewise when Obama spoke. However, Democrats took this several steps further when they refused to join Republicans in standing as Trump pledged to fight radical Islamic terrorism. Do Democrats disagree? Democrats audibly groaned when Trump said he would launch an initiative to assist victims of illegal-alien criminals. Do Democrats actually side with mayhem-inducing foreigners over innocent American citizens? Their behavior suggests as much.

Some moaned in January that Trump's inaugural speech was dark and brooding. MSNBC's Chris Matthews called it "Hitlerian," although *der Führer* probably would not have said, as Trump did: "When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice." From my spot at the foot of Capitol Hill during the swearing-in ceremony, Trump's words were positive and encouraging.

But Tuesday's speech was almost giddy in its Reaganesque optimism about America's potential.

"Everything that is broken in our country can be fixed," Trump said. "Every problem can be solved. And every hurting family can find healing and hope." He added:

Think of the marvels we can achieve if we simply set free the dreams of our people. Cures to the illnesses that have always plagued us are not too much to hope. American footprints on distant worlds are not too big a dream. Millions lifted from welfare to work is not too much to expect. And streets where mothers are safe from fear, schools where children learn in peace, and jobs where Americans prosper and grow are not too much to ask.

Some deeply troubled people, not least Bill Clinton, argue that "Make America Great Again" is a Caucasian dog-whistle to return this land to the pre-civil-rights era.

Rubbish.

Rather than look five decades back, President Donald J. Trump on Tuesday peered nine years ahead to 2026, when America will turn 250. He stirringly inspired us, his fellow Americans, to make ourselves and the nation worthy of that milestone.

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